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MINOR EDITORIALS.

THE EPITAPH OF SOCIOLOGY.

A FINAL definition of sociology has been "a long felt want." The lack is now supplied. The *Bibliotheca Sacra* projects its view into the near future and reads from the portents that sociology is "*A Passing Fad*."¹ This settles it. Let the definition be the epitaph!

Meanwhile the craze will survive in the minds of a few less discerning people than the discoverer of its futility. In the reckless spirit of those other gross and sordid souls who refuse to be diverted from their ordinary avocations by the latest prediction of the end of the world, we shall pursue the illusion that the study of actual men in actual social relations will continue to reward the student, and through him bless mankind at large, during a considerable portion of the twentieth century. At all events we shall not suspend publication before current subscriptions expire.

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THE LIMITS OF "CHRISTIAN SOCIOLOGY."

THE following note explains itself:

EDITOR JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY: It seems to me that Professor Shailer Mathews' suggestion in your pages that we may properly use the term "Christian Sociology" to designate the social philosophy of Christ as we use Hegelian, Baconian, Aristotelian of the philosophy of Hegel, Bacon and Aristotle is a conclusive answer to those who deny the propriety of the term "Christian Sociology." But a remark of Rodbertus, quoted and approved by Uhlhorn (*Christian Charity in the Ancient Church*, p. 29) is a yet more fundamental defense of the term under consideration. Rodbertus and Uhlhorn show that "we can speak of a community (that is, of society) only after Christianity had formed such." That all the human beings in one locality, in one nationality, in the world, including women, children, slaves, foreigners, constitute in each case a community, of which each soul is a sacred unit and the whole a common race, has never been clearly apprehended or practically

¹ *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January 1896, pp. 172-3.

recognized in law and customs outside of Christianity. To the question, then, whether there be such a thing as *Christian* sociology, we answer, *there is no other.*

NATIONAL BUREAU OF REFORMS,
Washington, D. C

WILBUR F. CRAFTS.

Our reply is that the term "Christian Sociology" is used in the only justifiable sense in the inductive studies of the social doctrines of Jesus contributed to this JOURNAL by Professor Mathews. This is not the sense in which the people who are most strenuous for its use have employed it, and in which they wish license to employ it. They want to make it a means of inflating the stock of sociological ignorance on which they are trying to do business.

Whether Jesus taught more or less truth that must be assimilated in ultimate sociology, that truth was a very small and—in form, at least,—incidental portion of his whole teaching. It is perfectly competent to digest and organize these sociological teachings, and it is entirely appropriate to name the resulting system "Christian Sociology." In a precisely parallel way it would be possible to derive a "Homeric Ethics" or a "Shakespearean Psychology."

The belief of Christians that every thing which Jesus taught is true, seems to be changed by some zealous Christians into the form "nothing which Jesus omitted to teach is true." Hence, the alternatives of importing into the teachings of Jesus everything which it seems desirable to believe, or to limit the realm of research to the subjects upon which he discoursed. The people who adopt either of these alternatives are bound to defend their consistency by denying the authority of anything supposed to be discovered from sources outside the New Testament.

The effrontery of much of the teaching which labels itself Christian Sociology is unspeakable. Its platform is, "Christ knew everything; therefore, by virtue of calling myself a Christian, I know everything." Consequently men who understood neither Christianity nor sociology assume the right to call themselves "Christian Sociologists" and to teach their own version of both.

We do not object to the use of the term "Christian Sociology," but we decidedly object to ignorant and opinionated abuse of it. The fundamental principles of human relationship which Jesus expounded must be recognized and applied in any permanently successful social

programme. So must the few principles of hygiene referred to in the New Testament. The former, however, do not exhaust the subject matter of sociology any more than the latter obviate the necessity of biology.

Mr. Craft's argument would prove that there was no philosophy, no ethics, no jurisprudence till Christianity became ascendant. It would prove that there are no societies (communities) today outside of Christendom. The argument connotes further that the writer has not taken the trouble to discriminate between sociology and social institutions.

Let us grant that the New Testament contains the nucleus of all that men need to know about the spirit of ideal human society. Let us assume that this is the pivotal element in sociology. There remain the phenomena of associated human life since men have peopled the earth; the reactions between human groups and their physical environments; between groups and their units, between groups and contemporary groups; between groups and their posterity. From all these facts or from such of them as can be discovered, we have to learn the laws of cause and effect, physical and psychical, to which social beings are subject; in spite of which or by means of which approach to the Christian ideal is to be accomplished. To say that this field of knowledge does not exist, or to say that it is within the scope of New Testament records is puerile perversity with which argument is impossible.